

TIME

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New Head at Harper's

In the four months since Willie Morris resigned as editor in chief at *Harper's*, Chairman John Cowles Jr. and Publisher William Blair have examined a list of nearly 100 names in the search for a successor. They talked to about 25 men, including several well known to the journalism fraternity: *Paris Review* Editor George Plimpton, former *Saturday Evening Post* Editor Otto Friedrich, onetime *Newsday* Publisher Bill Moyers, Columnist Tom Wicker, and London Bureau Chief Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times*. Last week Cowles and Blair finally decided on a dark horse: *TIME* Senior Editor Robert B. Shnayerson.

Bob Shnayerson, 45, has virtually no public image at all. Part of the reason lies in the relative anonymity of *TIME* editors, but much of it derives from Shnayerson's own personality. He has always been known to his colleagues as an intensely private person. John Fischer, *Harper's* longtime editor who had returned from retirement to see the magazine through its interregnum, first made contact with Shnayerson in early May. He was the only man actually offered the job. He received from Cowles promises of editorial carte blanche and complete parity with Publisher Blair on the executive level.

Polishing Prose. Shnayerson, the ninth editor in chief in *Harper's* 121-year history, is not taking over a healthy magazine. The publication lost \$100,000 last year, and will probably go deeper into the red this year. Circulation stood at 413,000 after *Harper's* acquired subscribers of the defunct *Reporter* magazine; it is now 325,000. Characteristically, Shnayerson says he will "face the music right away," and do what he can to cut costs. He cleared his desk at *TIME* on Saturday, reported to his new office 20 blocks away on Monday. He has already asked Acting Managing Editor Lewis Lapham to stay on. The future? There will be a shift in the editorial mix: rather than encourage writers to strut their stuff unhindered by editorial pencils, as they tended to do under Morris, Shnayerson will edit more tightly. In an effort to crack what he calls "the mystique of the mandarins," Shnayerson will try to get pieces from the experts, then use a small staff of "editors who can translate" to polish the prose. He says he plans regular capital coverage in *Harper's*, "some kind of Washington input different from anyone else's."

Shnayerson's own biography could make story material for *Harper's*. He was born Robert Beahan, the son of a playwright and a distant cousin of Brendan Behan. His mother's second mar-

riage was to a New York surgeon, Ned Shnayerson, who adopted him when he was eight. Shnayerson was subsequently shipped off to a succession of twelve schools. "It was," he recalls, "a miserable but interesting childhood, the kind that—if you survive—makes you stronger for having had it." After World War II service in the Navy (fleet oilers, submarines), he worked briefly as a junior reporter for the *New York Daily News* before enrolling at Dartmouth, where he became the college middleweight boxing champion and ran on the cross-country team. To maintain his fit condition, Shnayerson runs four miles each morning in Manhattan's Riverside Park.

High Standards. His professional life has been less peripatetic. He joined *LIFE* in 1950, put in a year with the *Time-Life News Service* as a correspondent based in Seattle, and came to *TIME* in 1955. He soon quit because of "an eerie feeling I was in the wrong place," but returned in 1957. For five years he wrote the magazine's Education section. After surviving a libel suit arising from one of his stories, Shnayerson proposed a Law section for *TIME*.^{*} He soon became the section's shepherd and one of the most respected legal affairs writers in the country. Appointed a senior editor in 1967, Shnayerson handled *TIME*'s Essay section for almost two years, has since edited Law, Education and Environment, the last section he started, in 1969. Understatement and high standards are the Shnayerson style; his editing tends to be heavy but deft.

Shnayerson speaks of his new assignment with *TIME* terseness and the hyperbole of a *Harper's* editor in chief: "*Harper's* must be vital. It is a great and important institution. We can't destroy its integrity, its intelligence. We can't become doctrinaire. We can't be predictably liberal or conservative. We must, and will be, full of surprises."

^{*} *TIME* had run a Law section sporadically from 1923 to 1937. It has appeared regularly since 1963.